

## OBITUARY.

## Dr. David Sharp, M. D., F. R. S., etc.

To our society the death of Dr. David Sharp is an irretrievable loss. The work and time which he devoted to the entomology of our Islands and the influence he exercised upon others working on our insect fauna placed him in a unique position. His death removes the second of the three men to whom we owe most of our knowledge of our insects.

Sharp was born at Towcaster, Northamptonshire, England, in 1840, but his parents moved to Stony Stratford, where he spent the first ten or eleven years of his life, and afterward to London. In 1853 he entered St. John's Foundation School, where he remained until he left to enter his father's business. At this time Herbert Spencer was living with his family, and it is evident that the writings and personality of this eminent philosopher influenced Sharp's mind and perhaps gave it that keen and logical quality which characterized his whole life and works.

Finding commercial life uncongenial he decided to study medicine. He first attended St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and afterward studied at Edinburgh University, where he graduated in 1866 with the degrees M. B. and C. M. After acting as assistant to his family's doctor in London he moved to Thornhill, Scotland, in 1867, where he was appointed to the Crichton Institute at Dumfries. In 1884 he moved to Southampton, England, and later to Dartford, Kent. In 1890 he was appointed curator of the insect collection of the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, where he remained until 1909, when he retired to Brockenhurst, in the south of England, for the rest of his life. He died August 27, 1922, shortly before his eighty-second birthday.

Sharp was interested in insects when a boy and collected Lepidoptera before he left school. He must have turned his attention to Coleoptera shortly before 1861; his note book of captures begins on April 16 of that year. His first publication was in 1865 and is a short paper on British species of Agathidium. In 1869 he published "A Revision of the British Species of Homalota," which showed his great ability for systematic work. He retained his love for the Staphylinidae all

through life and described Bate's collection from the Amazon, the collection for the *Biologia Centrali Americana*, collections from Japan and other smaller collections. His biggest single work was "On Aquatic Carnivorous Coleoptera or Dytiscidae" (1882), and it is of interest as he carried out a synthetic system of nomenclature on lines laid down in his pamphlet, "The Object and Method of Zoological Nomenclature" (1873). The work by which he is most generally known to entomologists is his "Insecta" in the Cambridge Natural History, one of the most readable and lucid textbooks on entomology.

But zoologists will always remember him for the time and labor he devoted to the *Zoological Record*. He acted as recorder of insects from 1885, and as editor of the work as well as recorder of insects from 1892 until a few weeks before his death. To many men this work alone would have been a life's work, and one wonders how he found time for so much besides. He had great powers of concentration, never wasted time, and he could turn from one subject to another without loss of time picking up the threads of his work. In zoological matters his judgment was sound, and he never allowed himself to be carried away by the various controversial subjects that have divided biologists during the last sixty years. While he appreciated the good in many of the theories brought forward, his keen mind could always see their limitations.

Sharp was deeply interested in island life and it is this aspect of his work which is of greatest interest to the members of this Society. He wrote a number of papers on the Coleoptera of New Zealand and started the late Major Broun on his entomological career. He wrote many papers on Japanese Coleoptera, and in 1888 was appointed a member of the committee to examine the fauna and flora of the West Indies. His friendship with the Rev. Thomas Blackburn brought him into personal relation with the Hawaiian Islands.

When this friendship began I am not able to find out, but in his note book we find that he was exchanging specimens with Blackburn in August 9, 1865. From 1876 to 1882 the Rev. Thomas Blackburn resided in Honolulu as chaplain to the bishop and senior priest of the cathedral, and although his duties allowed him very little time for collecting, yet he man-

aged to get a number of our interesting insects. In those days traveling about the Islands was vastly more difficult than at present. There was no Mountain Trail Club to cut trails through the forests, and a climb to the back of Tantalus and back was a hard day's work.

From 1877 to 1897 Sharp and Blackburn published a number of separate papers on the Coleoptera, and in 1885 they published a joint Memoir, bringing all the information together. Other specialists worked at other orders collected by Blackburn. This work demonstrated the unique quality of the fauna of the Islands and led to a desire for a more extended investigation. Owing to the advocacy of Prof. Alfred Newton and Dr. Sharp, the British Association for the Advancement of Science appointed a committee in the year 1890 "to report on the present state of our knowledge of the Sandwich Islands, and to take steps to investigate ascertained deficiencies in the fauna, with powers to co-operate with the committee appointed for the purpose by the Royal Society, and to avail themselves of such assistance as may be offered by the Hawaiian Government or the trustees of the museum at Honolulu." The two committees worked together for twenty-two years when the work was closed. During these years Sharp acted as secretary and also as editor to the three volumes of the *Fauna Hawaiensis* and worked on important sections of the Coleoptera.

His sound judgment was shown in selecting Dr. R. C. L. Perkins as field naturalist, and to the labors of these two, and, in a lesser degree, to the other specialists who worked on the different groups of insects, we owe the *Fauna Hawaiensis*. In no other group of islands in the tropics have the insects been worked out so completely. Through this work we have been able to realize fully the unique endemism of the fauna, to recognize the later emigrants from the native insects, and to see evolution "in being" in a more simple form than in any other part of the globe. It has also enabled us to carry on a line of economic work with an understanding that would have been impossible without it, and which has resulted in a saving of many millions of dollars to the agriculture of the Islands. This work in turn has been a huge experiment on the death factors

of insects and has added a distinct chapter to our understanding of Natural Selection.

All scientific work if truthfully carried out eventually finds its place in the sum of human activities, but few entomologists working along purely scientific lines have lived to see their work bear such practical results as have Sharp, Blackburn, and Perkins, the three founders of Hawaiian entomology.

The number of Sharp's writings is over 250, and it has only been possible to list those dealing with the Hawaiian Islands.

WORKS ON HAWAIIAN ENTOMOLOGY BY DR. DAVID SHARP.

- 1878. Description of a new species probably indicating a new genus of Anchomenidae, from the Sandwich Islands. Ent. Mo. Mag., XIV, pp. 178-180.
- 1878. Descriptions of some new species and a new genus of Rhyncophorous Coleoptera from the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. Ent. Soc. Lond., pp. 15-26.
- 1878. On some Nitidulidae from the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. Ent. Soc. Lond., pp. 127-140.
- 1878. On some Longicorn Coleoptera from the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. Ent. Soc. Lond., pp. 201-210.
- 1879. On some Coleoptera from the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. Ent. Soc. Lond., pp. 77-105.
- 1880. On some Coleoptera from the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. Ent. Soc. Lond., pp. 37-54.
- 1881. On some Coleoptera from the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. Ent. Soc. Lond., pp. 507-534.
- 1884. On some genera of the sub-family Anchomenini (Platynini Horn), from the Hawaiian Islands. Ent. Mo. Mag., XX, pp. 217-219.
- 1885. Notes on the genus *Plagithmysus* Motsch. C. R. Soc. Ent. Belg., p. LXXIV-VI.
- 1885. Memoirs on the Coleoptera of the Hawaiian Islands. Trans. R. Dublin Soc. (2), III, pp. 119-300, pls. IV, V, by Blackburn and Sharp.
- 1896. On *Plagithmysus*: a Hawaiian genus of Longicorn Coleoptera. Ent. Mo. Mag., XXXII, pp. 237-240, 241-245, 271-274.

1897. On *Plagithmysus*: a Hawaiian genus of Longicorn Coleoptera—Supplement. Ent. Mo. Mag., XXXIII, p. 12.  
1919. Studies in Rhynchophora V. The genus Rhyncogonus. Proc. Haw. Ent. Soc., IV, pp. 77-82.

## FAUNA HAWAIIENSIS.

Editor of the three volumes and writer of the following parts:

1900. Coleoptera Phytophaga, II, pp. 91-116.  
1903. Coleoptera Caraboidea, III, pp. 175-292.  
1908. Coleoptera III, pp. 367-579. Sharp and Scott.  
1910. Coleoptera III, pp. 645-650. Sharp and Perkins.  
1913. Preface, XI-XIII.

F. M.